



MO Charter Public School Commission

**Closure Guide for Schools
Winter 2024**

Missouri Charter Public School Commission
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Charter schools are unique entities in the education ecosystem. That is due largely to their basic design structure: They are set up around the needs of students, not adults. All decisions about the governance and metrics related to charter schools focus squarely on delivering a superior educational experience to students. The best interests of students are of paramount importance. It informs all decisions and must be the school's guiding "north star."

This mandate makes it necessary to analyze data and verify that the schools are not just results-based organizations, but that they achieve the results established in their charter. The documentation required of a charter school, which is submitted regularly to Epicenter, an online submission and certification platform, assures that the students receive a high-quality education. The end goal is to give students the tools to succeed in life, work and citizenship.

Throughout its lifecycle, each charter school submits data to the online system. It serves as a scorecard to assure that the school delivers the highest quality learning experience to students and meets its charter objectives.

A charter school's annual evaluation gauges how well it delivers on these objectives. It is a key component in the assurance system that places the role of the student uppermost. It is possible that the evaluation will deem a school not fully in compliance with its charter, the performance framework and/or statutes. Generally, that is when corrective action is taken to correct deficiencies. In some situations, if corrective action does not improve performance, probation results.

This action is often sufficient to identify areas of weakness, address them, shore up areas of deficiency and assure a strong school. However, if deficiencies are not addressed adequately, or it is clear that progress cannot be attained, non-renewal or revocation of the school's charter may become necessary. When this occurs, closure of the school must be handled in the least disruptive way to students and their families. It must also be done with care and sensitivity for staff members, as their jobs and careers will be impacted.

The Missouri Charter Public School Commission (MCPSC), school boards, staff, parents and residents of the community in which the school operates all strive for success of the school. A school meeting its charter objectives will not only help its students succeed in their future, but it can help stabilize neighborhoods. Closing a school is not an option any of these entities prefers, and it is a last resort. However, sometimes it becomes the necessary option.

There are specific school closure steps and processes established by Missouri law, Department of Elementary and Secondary (DESE) rules and MCPSC [policies](#). No one desires a school to fail; it is an outcome that the MCPSC and the school's board and supporters work diligently to avoid. However, when it becomes necessary to implement closure procedures, they must follow specific measures to assure continuity of education for the students enrolled in the affected institution.

How the Closure Process Works

When the decision is made to close a charter school, the MCPSC will provide tools and assistance to make a difficult process straightforward and minimize disruptions. This closure guide is intended as a description of the steps that must be completed, and to whom they are assigned. The [Commission's complete closure guide](#) outlines the entire processes for all parties (see Part II and Part III.) The purpose of this separate narrative is to help school board chairs and leaders understand their responsibility and provide a tool to track the school's process toward closure.

The primary entities with responsibilities for completing these actions are:

- MCPSC staff
- Closure transition team (CTT)
- Student transition team (STT)
- Charter school governance
- Charter school leadership
- Charter school finance
- Charter school personnel

MCPSC will assign an independent school closure coordinator (SCC) who will lead the closure process and chair the Closure Transition Team (CTT). The SCC serves as a liaison with the groups listed above. The SCC's role is to assure that all entities with closure responsibilities perform tasks in designated time frames. There are many moving parts to the closure process, and the SCC provides a single point of contact to keep the process moving to conclusion. Note: In some cases, the nonprofit corporation that manages the school will need to be dissolved.

The CTT – a group representing the various stakeholders involved with the school who will assist throughout the closure. It is chaired by the school closure coordinator. Membership is outlined in the closure guide, and pages 4 through 23 of the guide specify the CTT's responsibilities in the school closure process.

The STT – a subcommittee of the CTT. The STT’s main responsibility is to assure that there is a clear and smooth path for students of the closing school to move to a new school with minimal disruption to their education. A significant part of the STT’s role is assuring that student records are filed appropriately with their new school.

Charter school governance – the charter school’s board of directors.

Charter school leadership – executive director and senior leadership team members.

Charter school finance – charter school staff, board treasure and/or vendors who provide accounting functions for the school.

Charter school personnel – charter school staff responsible for human resource functions, including benefit, pension contribution, records, COBRAs, etc.

School Checklist

The guide also provides a checklist, which will help the school and board manage the various required responsibilities to make the closure process efficient and smooth. It specifies actions the school must do to complete the closure process.

The checklist also is designed to assist school leadership in assigning tasks to appropriate personnel. These tasks must be done at the school level, and the checklist will help ensure that those tasks — required by statute — are completed. It also will enable the CTT to track its progress in the completion of those tasks.

Closure Coordination

During the closure process, the SCC assigned by MCPSC will work closely with the school’s CTT and any other school personnel who own specific areas of responsibility. The activities that this combined group of individuals will work on in the coming months will assure that records are maintained appropriately to comply with requirements of the Missouri secretary of state regarding record retention. Closure coordination among team members will also assure

that students who previously attended the school in question will be enrolled in new schools and that their records will follow them.

The tasks included in the closure guide checklist, when completed, demonstrate the school's commitment to being a good steward of Missouri taxpayer dollars and strong supporter of quality education.

Sample Closure Letter to Parent

To: (Parents of students enrolled in affected school)

From: Official (e.g., board president)

Subject: Student transition

Dear (name of school) parent or guardian,

We at (name of school) thank you for trusting us to provide your child with one of the most essential elements of growth and development that a young person can experience: a quality education. Our dedicated staff has committed itself to deliver just that.

I now have the difficult task of informing you that (name of school) will close as of (date). (Name of school) has relinquished its state charter. While we have performed our responsibilities to the best of our ability and made your child's success and educational progress our guiding objective, factors beyond your child's control have forced us to end that relationship.

As such, there will be a necessary transition period and specific steps required to assure your child does not lose any momentum in learning. Please note that (name of school) will be open for the rest of this school year. It is, however, very important that you begin planning for the next school year. We will do everything in our power to assist you with this transition and minimize disruptions in finding a new, good-match school for your child to attend.

Enclosed with this letter you will find a School Options Resource Guide to use for the transition. The Missouri Charter Public School Association will also be a useful resource for you in this process.

For the remainder of this school year, (name of school) will continue to provide all of its regular school activities and special services for which children qualify through IEP and 504 plans. Breakfast and lunch programs will continue uninterrupted, and state MAP testing will be completed as scheduled.

Thank you for your understanding and patience during this time. Please contact me directly at (phone number) if you have any concerns or questions.

Sincerely,

(signature, title)

Sample Closure Letter to Community Members

To: (Community leaders)
From: Official (e.g., board president)
Subject: Student transition

Dear (name),

As you know, (name of school) has served our community since (year of opening). We have worked diligently to provide a nurturing environment for students and serve as a catalyst for stability in the surrounding neighborhoods. We appreciate all of your support in our quest to serve the needs of some of our most important assets, our children.

Parents in the community have trusted us to provide their children with one of the most essential elements of growth and development a young person can experience: a quality education. The dedicated staff at (name of school) has committed itself to deliver just that.

I now have the difficult task of informing you that (name of school) will close as of (date). (Name of school) has relinquished its state charter. While we have performed our responsibilities to the best of our ability and made students' success and educational progress our guiding objective, factors beyond their control have forced us to end that relationship.

As such, there will be a necessary transition period and specific steps required to assure our students do not lose any momentum in learning. Please note that (name of school) will be open for the rest of this school year. It is, however, very important that parents begin planning for the next school year. We will do everything in our power to assist them with this transition and minimize disruptions to find a good-match new school for their children to attend.

We have already alerted parents that we will work closely with them and their child on this transition. If a parent should contact you for guidance, please assure the individual we are working with understanding and care on each transition step.

For the remainder of this school year, we will continue to provide all of our regular school activities and special services for which children qualify through IEP and 504 plans. Breakfast and lunch programs will continue uninterrupted, and state MAP testing will be completed as scheduled.

Thank you for your understanding and patience during this time. Please contact me directly at (phone number) if you have any concerns or questions.

Sincerely,
(signature, title)